



Bird Flu (Avian Influenza - H5N1)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is avian influenza (bird flu)?

Bird flu is a disease caused by bird flu viruses. These flu viruses are common in birds and very contagious among birds. Some bird flu viruses can make birds very sick and kill. Currently there is an outbreak of bird flu in some parts of the world making birds very ill. It is called Influenza A (H5N1), but most people just call it bird flu.

Do bird flu viruses infect humans?

Not usually, but some cases of human infection with bird flu viruses have occurred.

How is it different from regular influenza?

Bird flu is new to humans. Most people have some immunity to regular flu but very little protection from bird flu. This means more people could get seriously ill or die from bird flu.

What are symptoms of bird flu in humans?

Bird flu symptoms in humans are usual flu symptoms - fever, cough, sore throat and muscle aches. Other symptoms include pneumonia and severe respiratory diseases.

How does bird flu spread?

Bird flu spreads to humans who have been in close contact with infected birds or have touched surfaces and objects dirtied by bird poop. Most human infections were in rural areas where chickens and birds share living space with humans. Sick birds shed large amounts of virus in their stools. People have also been infected with bird flu when killing, plucking, cleaning chickens or other birds.

Have there been any human bird flu cases in the United States?

No. Outbreaks of influenza in birds have occurred in other parts of the world, mostly Asia. Some countries have had a few human cases too. There have been no reported cases of bird flu in birds or humans in the United States.

Is there a vaccine to protect humans from bird flu?

There currently is no vaccine to protect humans against the H5N1 bird flu virus. There is ongoing research and vaccine development.

How Can I protect myself?

Avoid contact with infected birds. If you suspect you have been exposed to bird flu see your doctor as soon as possible.

For more information:

Call the Public Health Department Epidemiology Program at (909) 383-3050 or visit these sites:

www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/

www.PandemicFlu.gov

www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/